Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
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Nantucket Shadbush

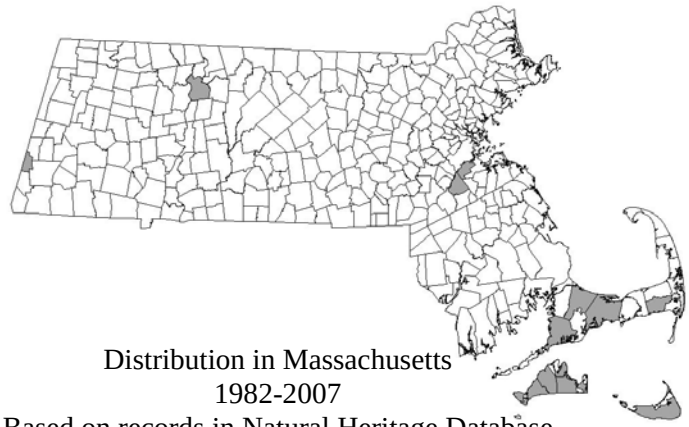
Amelanchier nantucketensis

State Status: **Special Concern**
Federal Status: None

Description: Nantucket Shadbush (*Amelanchier nantucketensis)* is a globally rare perennial shrub species within the Rose family (Rosaceae). It has a colonial growth habit that results in many closely-clustered and straight stems up to 2 (–3) meters tall. Whitish-cream colored 5-petaled flowers in racemes appear in May to early June followed by small dark-blue berries in late June though early July.

Aids to identification: Nantucket Shadbush is separable from other shadbushes by its small flower petals. They are 3–6 (–7) mm, and are often spatulate (spoon) shaped and inrolled, and are sometimes pollen-bearing (andropetalous) along the margins. The alternately arranged leaves (1.5–2 cm wide) are finely toothed, glabrous (smooth) and shiny above at maturity. Immature leaves have hairy white undersides that give plants a gray-teal cast before they mature; bark is often gray. A taxon described as *Amelanchier stolonifera* forma *micropetala* is now considered synonymous with *A. nantucketensis*.

Similar species: Running Shadbush (*Amelanchier spicata*; syn. *A. stolonifera)* is a colonial shrub which can be confused with Nantucket shadbush. However, the petals of *A. spicata* are longer (6–) 7–22 mm, and the petals are not pollen bearing. In addition, Running Shadbush tends to have bent, branched stems rarely greater than 1.5 m tall.



Distribution in Massachusetts
1982-2007
Based on records in Natural Heritage Database

Dibble, A. 1995. Conservation biology of Shadbush, *Amelanchier* (Rosaceae): Evidence from systematics, population structure and reproductive ecology. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, Orono.

Habitat in Massachusetts: Nantucket shadbush is primarily a coastal plain species found in sunny, dry, sandy soils in upland habitats like grasslands, pine barrens, old fields, and roadsides. Populations have also been found on rock ledges at mountain summits. Plants commonly found growing in association with Nantucket Shadbush include Scrub Oak (*Quercus ilicifolia*) and Pitch Pine (*Pinus rigida*), Northern Arrow wood (*Viburnum dentatum*), Bayberry (*Morella caroliniensis*), Black Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), Virginia rose (*Rosa virginiana*), and Low-bush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*). Frequently observed herbaceous associates include Little Bluestem (*Schizachrium scoparium*) and Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*).

Range: Nantucket shadbush is an endemic of the Atlantic Coast; populations have been located from Nova Scotia south along the coastal plain to Virginia, with predominately larger populations on the Islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. It is tracked as a rare species in Maine, New York, Maryland and Virginia.

Flowers Present:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
				■	■	■					

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Threats: Nantucket Shadbush is threatened by conversion of its dry, upland habitat to developed areas. It is also threatened by succession, and prevention of natural disturbance regimes, such as fire, that results in succession. Several populations occur along roadsides, and while the species is taking advantage of the open habitat provided by the roadsides, individual plants are vulnerable to inadvertent damage by roadside maintenance.

Population status in Massachusetts: Nantucket Shadbush is listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act as a species of Special Concern. All listed species are legally protected from killing, collection, possession, or sale, and from activities that would destroy habitat and thus directly or indirectly cause mortality or disrupt critical behaviors. Nantucket Shadbush is currently known from Dukes, Nantucket, Barnstable, Norfolk, Franklin and Berkshire Counties and is historically known from Hampden County.

Management recommendations: The survival of Nantucket shadbush ultimately depends on the conservation of its early successional habitat. Therefore, management actions should involve vegetation control to impede succession such that an early seral stage is maintained. Disturbance treatments (fire, cutting, grazing) may be useful tools in managing succession and populations have been shown to respond favorably to such practices. To avoid inadvertent harm to rare plants, all active management of rare plant populations should be planned in consultation with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.

Updated June 2007